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C O N F I D E N T I A L BANJUL 000180

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/10/2017  
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [KMCA](#) [GA](#)  
SUBJECT: THE GAMBIA: UPDATE ON CASE OF FATOU JAW MANNEH

REF: A. BANJUL 173

[1](#)B. BANJUL 167

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JOSEPH STAFFORD, REASON 1.4 (B AND D)

UPDATE ON CASE  
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[1](#)1. (C) Reftels report the March 28 detention and subsequent trial of U.S.-based Gambian journalist and opposition supporter Fatou Jaw Manneh. She is currently free on bail after pleading not guilty, and her trial resumes April 11; emboffs plan to attend the session. There is the possibility that the presiding magistrate will throw out the case, accepting the defense attorney's argument that Gambian courts have no jurisdiction in the matter as Manneh's allegedly seditious remarks in a June 2004 press interview were made in the U.S.

AMBASSADOR FLAGS CASE  
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[1](#)2. (C) After initial raising the case with senior National Intelligence Agency (NIA) official (ref a), Ambassador continues to flag our concern in contacts with senior GOTG officials. In April 8-10 discussions with the Attorney General, Trade Minister, and Foreign Affairs Permanent Secretary, Ambassador stressed that Washington was following

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the case closely and that it was imperative that Manneh's rights be fully respected and that she be promptly released in the absence of any credible evidence of wrongdoing. He also emphasized that the outcome of this case would be among developments figuring in USG assessments of the GOTG's human rights performance and in consideration of the country's future eligibility for AGOA and MCA. The GOTG officials took the Ambassador's presentation on board, indicating that they grasped the gravity of the matter.

COMMENT  
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[1](#)3. (C) We propose holding off on a public statement on the case, at least for the time being. The reason: to go public at this point might well prove counterproductive, in terms of generating a defiant, resentful reaction by the volatile Gambian President and leaving him determined to see Manneh punished. We note that, at an April 3 GOTG cabinet meeting, Jammeh complained about the slow pace of judicial proceedings in The Gambia and warned officials to speed up trials or risk dismissal. It remains to be seen what impact Jammeh's warning may have on the presiding magistrate in Manneh's trial. In any event, we will continue to raise the case with GOTG contacts and will report on the outcome of the April 11 trial session. END COMMENT  
STAFFORD